

## ***Families in the Family of God***

### ***Living with Lambs***

Lesson #4 for January 28, 2006

Scriptures: Gen. 16:1; Deut. 8:5; Pss. 30:1-9; 50:10-12; 127:3; Prov. 3:11,12; Mic. 6:8.

1. Do you think of your children as a gift from the Lord? (Psalms 127:3) When they are good? When they are asleep? When they are bad?
2. In this lesson we are supposed to explore reasons why people may choose to have children. We are to learn and understand the responsibilities that go along with having children and to understand clearly from Scripture that children are gifts created and given to us by God.
3. In our day of genetic and reproductive manipulation do we still think of children as a gift from the Lord? Isn't the reproductive process a carefully researched scientific one? Don't we know each step? Children are certainly a great responsibility! Financially, spiritually, an enormous investment in time and energy!
4. **Why do you think God designed us to have children?** In our last lesson we suggested that children look to their parents as if they were God. (See #10 below) In this lesson we're going to ask ourselves what lessons can parents learn from having children?
5. **Is every child a gift from God?** Even those that are born as a result of rape or incest? Did Bathsheba believe that her child by David was a gift from the Lord? Do all the teenage unmarried mothers in our day considered their children as gifts from the Lord?
6. Does God control the birth process and the reproductive process so that only those who deserve it receive children? What is implied by the idea that we and our children belong to God?
7. **What is the relationship between our planning of our families and God's giving us children? What percentage of children are planned for? What percentage of children in our day are born out of wedlock? Are such children planned for? Is it ever God's plan for a child to be born out of wedlock? Why or why not? Was Jesus born out of wedlock?**
8. Do you agree with our Bible study guide when it says (Sabbath afternoon) "Children, indeed, are gifts from God; outside of life itself (both temporal and eternal), they are the most wonderful of all gifts. Yet, the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility upon those who receive the gift." Do you know people who have suddenly become a lot more serious and even returned to the church because they had a child? Why do you think this happens?
9. There is pretty good evidence for the idea that children learn many of the principles that they will live with for the rest of their lives in the first three years. This is not didactic learning. In what ways do children learn during their first three years?
10. Where do children get their main ideas about what God is like?

**Parents stand in the place of God to their children and they will have to render an account, whether they have been faithful to the little few committed to their trust.** Parents, some of you are rearing children to be cut down by the destroying angel, unless you speedily change your course, and be faithful to them. God cannot cover iniquity, even in children. He cannot love unruly children who manifest passion, and he cannot save them in the time of trouble. Will you suffer your children to be lost through your neglect? Unfaithful parents, their blood will be upon you, and is not your salvation doubtful with the blood of your children upon you? children that might have been saved had you filled your place, and done your duty as faithful parents should. {RH, 9/19/1854 par. 4; 10/14/1875 par. 3; 3/28/1893 par. 4; AH 320.3; FLB 269.8}
11. **What did your children learn about God from the way you disciplined them in early childhood?** Do children even understand the idea of God in their first three years? How are we to teach our children to be true disciples of Christ and children of God in their early childhood?
12. **How much of your picture of God depends on your picture of your parents?** Who do you

think affected your picture of God more, your father or your mother? Which parent do we usually associate with the picture of God? Why? If we say that a child is an inheritance from the Lord what are we implying?

13. Would it be all right to think of God as a mother? Or only as a father?
14. Think of your own parents. Can you identify specific characteristics that you learned from them which are truly godlike? Name a few.
15. When we feel it is necessary to discipline our children does it make a difference whether we discipline in love or anger? Can the child detect the difference? How does it affect them?
16. Children seem to be able to discern almost immediately how genuine our religious experience is. How do they do this? What do they perceive that perhaps we sometimes do not? Do children learn more from our words, our claims, or our actions and our behavior?
17. In biblical times children were a family's social security policy. The firstborn son was expected to receive a dual portion of the inheritance because it was his responsibility to care for the aging parents. In our day with the government stepping in and Social Security etc. has this responsibility gone away?
18. Why is it that in some cultures male children are valued so much higher than female children? Does God value them differently?
19. For those of you who are parents, try to think back to the time before your children were born. How did their birth affect your family? Can you even imagine what your family would be like without them!? Do children tend to pull families together and cement relationships or to tear them apart and destroy them?
20. Think of the many women in the Bible who struggled to get pregnant: Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, Manoah's wife, Elizabeth etc. Did God specifically prevent these women from getting pregnant so that He could work His will through them?
21. If you are one of those couples who require some kind of assistance in reproducing is it still correct to say that your child is a gift from the Lord? What about an adopted child?
22. There are good reasons and bad reasons for becoming pregnant! Some couples choose to get pregnant to see if it will heal their marriage! Some couples get pregnant because they don't provide for family planning! Some couples get pregnant because they don't know any better! But some couples get pregnant because they believe that their love for each other will blossom in their love for a child and bring all of them closer to God.
23. **What are the major responsibilities that a person or a couple takes on when they give birth to a child?** Supplying the needs of a child; instructing, guiding, giving a good example, even educating a child, disciplining, correcting, and finally, setting the child free.
24. **Very often children are a comfortable part of a family until they become teenagers! What happens during the teen years that so often disrupts a family? Is this a result of hormones? Of association? Of growing maturity? How should parents relate to this growing desire and demand for freedom? How did God deal with children who rebelled against Him? If you are struggling with a rebellious teenager does it help to know what God went through?**
25. There are many stories told about women particularly who are reluctant to allow their children the freedom they need. We sometimes call this untying the apron strings. How should we decide when the right time is to progress to each new step of freedom for our children? Should we as parents specifically try to help our children develop up through the moral development stages? How can we best do this?
26. It has been suggested on many occasions that the secret to good child-rearing is a loving balance of control and support. How do we determine how much control and how much support?

27. Look at some specific examples in the Bible of child-rearing principles. Jacob with Joseph (Genesis 37:3,4); Manoah and his wife and their son Sampson (Judges 14:1-3); Eli and his sons (1 Samuel 2:22-25, 3:13); Samuel and his sons (1 Samuel 8:1-5) what difference would a correct loving balance between control and support have made in each of these families?
28. At the end of a spanking in the early years of a child's life is he likely to be overcome with love for his parents? Or more likely to be plotting vengeance? **How are parents to make rules few, consequences clear, and loving follow-up regular and winsome? Do your children see clearly the firmness and kindness balanced in your own life?**
29. How can we make certain that we avoid the extremes of blind affection and undue severity?  
 "While we are not to indulge blind affection, neither are we to manifest undue severity. Children cannot be brought to the Lord by force. They can be led, but not driven. 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,' Christ declares. He did not say, My sheep hear My voice and are forced into the path of obedience. In the government of children love must be [308] shown. Never should parents cause their children pain by harshness or unreasonable exactions. Harshness drives souls into Satan's net." {RH 1/29/01; CT 114.1; AH 307.3}
30. Read Micah 6:8. What principles can we learn from this passage about child rearing?
31. "The combined influence of authority and love will make it possible to hold firmly and kindly the reins of family government. An eye single to the glory of God and to what our children owe Him will keep us from looseness and from sanctioning evil." {AH 308.1; FLB 266.9}
32. Parents need to recognize that when teaching and instructing and guiding their children they are preparing hearts and minds for eternity.
33. **How do children develop faith? What factors in a child's life lead him to trust those in authority?** Why do you think Jesus spoke so harshly about those who lead children astray? (Matthew 18:5-6; Mark 9:42).
34. How does God feel about adults who sexually abuse children or even involve them in incest? What does this do to the children involved? These kinds of experiences often lead to lifelong scars.
35. **Does God ever ask us as adults to be too busy to spend significant time with our children? How should we balance the needs of our profession our financial responsibilities and the needs of our children?**
36. How should Christians deal with corporal punishment?  
 "The mother may ask, 'Shall I never punish my child?' Whipping may be necessary when other resorts fail; yet she should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so. But if milder measures prove insufficient, punishment that will bring the child to its senses should in love be administered. Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control." {CT 116.3; CG 250.3}
37. **Is it possible that God allowed us to procreate and to have children specifically so that we could learn something more about Him? Is child-rearing and ultimately allowing our children to go free to live their own lives the most godlike thing that we do? What have you learned about God from your children?**

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